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familiar, were given to the Gros Ventres at the Milk River. In spite of warnings, the Indians ate the food uncooked, with the result that many became sick and several died. A creole Frenchman, living among them at the time, persuaded the Gros Ventres that they had been poisoned deliberately, and some of the warriors wanted to go after Culbertson with the intention of killing him. Fortunately, however, Culbertson was so well known to and liked by most of the Gros Ventres that the rasher members of the tribe were restrained from carrying out this project.[67]

Stevens concluded in 1855 a treaty at the Judith River whereby the Blackfoot Nation (including the Gros Ventres) agreed that their territory should be a common hunting territory for all signatories. The United States agreed to spend $20,000 each year for 10 years in provisions for the Gros Ventres, Blackfoot, Piegan and Blood, and $15,000 a year for ten years in instructing them in agriculture and mechanical pursuits, educating their children, and so on. The non-signatory tribes were the Crow, Assiniboine and Sioux.[68]

Although it was reported that the good will among the tribes was remarkable, and that peace was sincerely desired, raiding parties continued very much as before. In addition, more and more whites were encroaching on the territory supposed to have been reserved for the use of the Blackfoot tribes and Gros Ventres. Gold was discovered within the area about 1862, and Lewis has given a cogent summary of events which led up to Piegan enmity toward both Gros Ventres and whites, and which culminated in war, 1866–70.[69]

The End of the Buffalo Days (1870–1890).

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The end of the buffalo days was now rapidly approaching. The completion of the Union Pacific railroad in 1869 split the northern and southern herds of buffalo. With the presence of increasing numbers of commercial white hunters, armed with long-range repeating rifles, the end of the great north herd was beginning in 1876. It was not, however, until 1880 that slaughter was universal

[67] Bradley, p. 271.
[68] Hoopes, pp. 113–15.
[69] O. Lewis, pp. 62–66.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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over the area. The Gros Ventres had the benefit of buffalo hunting a trifle longer than the other groups. All the buffalo in Montana were in February, 1882, in their territory, between the Milk River and the Bear Paw Mountains. The hunting season, of October 1882 to February 1883, finished the annihilation of the great northern herd and left only stragglers, merely a few thousands.[70] By August, 1883, both the Blackfoot and the Crow Agencies reported that all game was gone from their respective reservations, and a letter from the Fort Belknap Agency stated that game there "was practically exhausted."[71] In 1884 the Blackfoot and Crow agencies reported that the buffalo was extinct.[72] After ceding more land, in 1888 the limits of the Fort Belknap Reservation, which the Gros Ventres share with the Assiniboine, were finally fixed.[73]

Missionary endeavors, carried on by the Jesuit Fathers, had begun in earnest only in 1885. Prior to that time contact with missionaries had been sporadic. Father Point in 1846–47 had been well received and sent in a good report of this tribe. When Father Giorda attempted to go among them in 1862, however, Bull Lodge took him prisoner and stripped him of his possessions. Since his captivity did not last longer than a few weeks, and his property was restored to him, several months later he made another attempt. This time, while there was some opposition at first, he was permitted to baptize over a hundred children. Subsequently Fathers Rappagliosi and Grassi made several visits respectively, and at considerable intervals. Finally, after some preliminary negotiations, Father Ebershweiler established permanent residence in 1885, and the school at St. Paul's was opened in 1887. The mission and school flourished. In 1891 the founder was replaced by Father Flusi, assisted by Father Sansome.[74]

The Gros Ventres population—always small, relative to that of surrounding tribes—was steadily declining. Hayden's estimate of 1853 placed the total at 2520.[75] In 1883, at the time of the

[70] Hornaday, pp. 492, 506, 510–11.
[71] Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883–1915, pp. lx, 98.
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 295.
[74] Palladino, pp. 187, 195–96, 230, 232, 235.
[75] Hayden, p. 344. Gros Ventres today claim their number was then 10,000.